

VZCZCXR08573
PP RUEHDBU RUEHIK RUEHPW RUEHYG
DE RUEHBUL #1165/01 0991313
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 091313Z APR 07
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7377
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE
RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE
RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHINGTON DC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 3920
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHINGTON DC
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RHMFIUU/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 KABUL 001165

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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DEPT FOR SCA/FO GASTRIGHT, SCA/A
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN
OSD FOR SHIVERS
TREASURY FOR ABAUKOL
CENTCOM FOR CG CJTF-82, AND POLAD

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [EAID](#) [ECON](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: PRT/MAZAR: SNAPSHOT OF FARYAB PROVINCE: ECONOMY,
SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND SECURITY SITUATION

REF: KABUL 1032

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Faryab, the gateway to the north, has an agricultural economy crippled by severe drought. Many families cannot afford to buy enough food. Development has been slow to reach the region, which has fewer than 20 miles of paved roads. Half of all children start school, but most girls leave after the fourth year and boys by the end of the seventh. Young men go abroad to seek jobs since the only jobs in Faryab are in the failing agricultural sector. The security situation has improved, although crime is still a problem. The police are finding a role in the community, however, the weak court system remains ignored. Bright spots include the introduction of electricity to the two largest towns and ongoing construction of the ring road. Schools and other development projects are slowly being built. UNAMA has finally staffed its office in Meymenah. Attention needs to be paid to the varied challenges presented in the North. While the Taliban may not be poised at the doorstep of the northern provinces, locals are looking for alternatives. Now is the time to help Faryab before locals find another, less desirable way to deal with their current circumstances. END SUMMARY.

Basic Provincial Demographics

¶2. (SBU) Predominantly rural Faryab is the largest province in northwest Afghanistan. Faryab is a chokepoint for many of Afghanistan's major smuggling routes. PRT Meymenah asserts that the Taliban's strategy included attacking the region from Faryab province. Most of Faryab's one million inhabitants are poor farmers. It lacks any real urban centers. Meymenah, the province's capital and largest town, is home to about 70,000 residents. There is a higher concentration of Uzbeks (50 percent) and Turkmen (14 percent) than in Afghanistan as a whole. Pashtuns represent 20 percent of the local population. General Dostum and his Junbesh party dominate the province.

Severe Drought Hampers Economy

13. (SBU) The economy is suffering from the effects of a severe drought that has lasted for more than four years. The province is almost entirely agricultural, producing mainly rain-fed grain and grazed sheep. The few small dams provide little irrigation water. Crop failure last year was 70-90 percent, which also caused animal fodder prices to shoot up prohibitively. Sheep starved across the province, forcing owners to slaughter them thus glutting the market. Some took their cattle and sheep east, where prices were higher in the fall. More and more residents of the province continue to face the threat of starvation. Some have borrowed money against production of drought-resistant poppy, although cultivation is estimated to be lower this year except in the westernmost district of Quaisar. According to the Provincial Council, farmers do not need payments, but rather long term loans so they can introduce plowing with tractors (they use cows), modern farming techniques for vegetables and orchards, and better seeds.

14. (SBU) Markets are well-stocked but most people have no money to shop. A significant amount of new economic activity is driven by the international community. The PRT employs 1000 local workers on projects including construction of a new camp. Last summer, doors and windows were unavailable for purchase, although demand for them was high for use in foreign-financed school construction and shelter kits. In response to this demand, two carpentry shops have been opened. The new electricity connection (opened two months ago) and the ring road construction, expected to finish in two years, should stimulate economic activity in the medium term. For now, Faryab has fewer than twenty miles of paved roadway, even though the province is the eighth largest in

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Afghanistan. Electricity is only available to 10 percent of residents and only at night.

Food Shortages Widespread

15. (SBU) Afghan and international observers agree that in the short term, this province needs food more than schools, highways and clinics. In addition to its normal program, the World Food Program had planned supplemental drought relief of 7500 metric tons of wheat. According to the Norwegian Political Advisor at the PRT, the wheat has been stuck in Pakistani warehouses for the last five months and is not expected to be released soon.

Few Jobs Available

16. (SBU) Few jobs are available outside of the agricultural sector, which is failing, so young males go abroad to work. Since the summer of 2006, there has been little family migration. Experts estimate outward migration exceeds inward migration, including returning internally displaced persons (IDPs), by 25 percent right now. Shias go to Iran; Sunnis to Pakistan. An estimated 40 percent of residents are involved in the opium business, which is an important income source for the warlords brokering power in the districts.

Few Children Remain in School

17. (SBU) Education also faces challenges: there are shortages of facilities, teachers, and secondary schools. Of the 407 schools in the province, 84 have buildings. The rest are in tents, homes, mosques, or under trees in the open air. Five to ten schools were built in the last year by the GOA. There is a shortage of qualified teachers; some cannot read or write. The international community is supplying 130 school tents for the new school year. An estimated 50-60 percent of children go to school, split almost evenly between girls and boys. In the fifth year, there is a sharp drop in the number

of girls attending; many boys are pulled out before the seventh year, bringing the gender balance back. Factors in pulling children out of school include the lack of secondary schools and the security risk for girls who must often walk to schools in neighboring villages. Boys also leave to start work, girls to be married, often extremely young.

Security Better, But Crime Problematic

¶ 18. (SBU) Security overall has improved over the last two years, although crime is rampant. Weapons are still widespread. NGOs have no particular security issues; it is more Faryab's isolation that gives them pause about opening offices here. The long-awaited Meymenah UNAMA field office was finally staffed in February.

¶ 19. (SBU) Around Meymenah, the police are the most visible and the most trusted of the government institutions, which are largely ignored by local residents. The local ANA representation and the PRT are both small. The countryside is Dostum territory. There, warlords tell the people that they are the security against the return of the Taliban. Many believe them since they have not seen any serious alternatives. People use police services; the courts have a more dubious reputation and are largely avoided. There are no professional judges or prosecutors. In Faryab, a little more than half of the incidents are handled in the Shura system; the rest are handled by the court system.

Slow Development Hinder's GOA's Reach

¶ 10. (SBU) More than half of NSP funding goes to the water sector. The population has asked for more schools; three

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girls high schools are under construction in district centers. Basic health services programs are operating but few clinics are located in the mountains and no winter service is provided. In Kohistan, for example, all government influence is weak. No girls go to school there after the fourth year, no boys after the seventh. The provincial hospital is under-funded and under-staffed. It still lacks the specialties that were promised to level two provinces like Faryab. Some micro-hydro projects are planned but none have been started.

¶ 11. (SBU) The Chinese and Korean firms constructing the ring road have been the targets of several attacks but work is continuing. On November 26, President Karzai opened the new power line from Turkmenistan. Before that date, no electricity was available in Faryab. Because construction of the grid in the city is going on during the days, power is available only at night in Meymenah, Andkhoy (the province's second largest town) and a few villages along the power line's route. Some more prosperous residents have generators. Most do without electricity entirely.

¶ 12. (SBU) The GOA still has much work to do to bring even a small improvement to the very low standard of living of most Faryab residents. The international community continues to support the GOA to ensure that progress continues, albeit slowly, so that the people of Faryab will be motivated enough to resist any potential Taliban sweep up to the North from the South.

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